



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

#### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### PRIIBILOF ISLAND FUR-SEAL TAKE ANNOUNCED

A total of 70,891 fur-seal skins were taken this year in the Government-administered sealing-operations on Alaska's Pribilof Islands, the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior announced today. The annual seal-skin season began on June 10 and continued on a daily basis from June 17 through July 27.

This year's yield was 749 skins more than in 1948. Two record daily kills were reported, one on July 22 with 5,329 skins, the largest kill in more than 60 years. The other record was established on July 17 with 4,950 skins.

The fur-seal industry in the Pribilofs is a Government responsibility, but 20 percent of the annual take of skins become the property of the Canadian government under the provisions of the 1944 Alaska Fur-Seal Law. Approximately 80 percent of the world's fur-seals come to the Pribilof Islands to breed.

The 1949 fur-seal census has not been reported but last year it was 3,837,000 animals. The seal population of the Pribilofs increased from a low of 132,000 animals in 1910 to its present size under Federal conservation and management.

After being dressed and dyed by the Fouke Fur Company in St. Louis -- Government agents in the processing and selling of the skins -- the furs are offered for sale at public auction, the net proceeds going to the Treasury of the United States.

Valuable by-products of this year's fur-sealing are the 350 tons of fur seal meal, 14,000 gallons of carcass oil and 33,000 gallons of blubber oil. These products are made in a Government-operated plant on the Pribilofs and will also be offered at auction.

The Navy supply vessel Titania, which is now at the Pribilofs unloading annual supplies, will soon load the furs and by-products and return to Seattle.

During the winter the fur-seals range southward as far as southern California and then regather in the spring on the barren, volcanic Pribilof Islands where the cow seals immediately give birth to a single calf -- after a gestation period of nearly a year.

The polygamous fur-seals live in "rookeries," with 35 or 40 cow seals under the domination of one old bull. At birth the number of seals of both sexes is approximately equal, but the surplus male animals -- not needed for breeding purposes -- may be taken without reducing the rate of growth of the herd.

Pelagic sealing -- the killing of seals while they are at sea -- is prohibited by an international agreement between Canada and the U. S. At one time pelagic sealing nearly brought about the extinction of the animals.